

## Via Negative 2021: Into the Mystic

*“Reach out your hand if your cup be empty. If your cup is full may it be again. Let it be known, there is a fountain, that was not made by the hands of men ...”*

The Grateful Dead lyrics echo the Psalmist who sings: “People feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights. For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.” (36: 8-9)

A fountain that fills empty cups, a river of delights, the fountain of life ... doesn't sound exactly like the Via Negativa, does it? Or ... is it because of the deep-flowing fountain that we are free to empty our hands, knowing there's a way for them to be filled again?

The Via Negativa is one big, long letting go. Releasing the sun to set over the horizon. Unhinging the leaves from the branches above. Taking the John Deere to chop the final harvest of the season down to the ground. Staring into the abyss of the empty cup.

You know who's good at all this emptying out and letting go? The mystics. Ancient ones, modern ones, Christian and Sufi and Native American and Buddhist ones. The mystics are the ones who see down to the underground river, the source of the spring, the foundation of the fountain. They don't get too hung up on who excavated the well or what method they use to pull up the bucket. They just know the Source is there for anyone who is willing to dig down and find it!

Sinking into the master mystics reminds us that we're all mystics in the making. It's a core belief of Creation Spirituality that every one of us carries within us the capacity to be a mystic. So let's go on a mystical, magical ride together into the Via Negativa!

A glimpse of what's to come:

9/19 – Hildegard of Bingen on the Equinox

A 12<sup>th</sup> Christian mystic and Benedictine abbess proficient in philosophy, musical composition, herbology, medieval literature, cosmology, medicine, biology, theology, and natural history, Hildegard pushed the established boundaries for women almost past their limits. Mirabai Starr writes:

“Hildegard of Bingen inhabited that legendary line between genius and madness. Her inner world was a luminous web of visions and voices, scientific breakthroughs, artistic epiphanies, and emotional obsessions. This is a dance that has always intrigued me: the interplay of brokenness and brilliance, that numinous zone where chemical imbalance meets spiritual giftedness. Halfway through her life, Hildegard finally came to peace with her uncommon mind and spirit. Only then was her true genius able to flower with such potency that her wisdom ripples across nine centuries.”

### 9/26 – Julian of Norwich and All Shall Be Well

Julian was a 14<sup>th</sup> century English mystic best known for her trust in a mothering God. Through visions she received during a painful, nearly fatal illness, she came to trust that the pains of the whole world will be redeemed by a most loving God. She was not told how it will happen, but, in her encounter with God as Mother, she is told again and again: “All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.” Julian had lived through the Black Death, which killed about one third of the Europe’s population in two years, so she did not come to this vision with easy optimism, but with stone-cold realism. When we sing “All Shall Be Well” on Sunday mornings, we’re singing her vision and leaning into her deep trust.

### 10/3 – St. Francis and the Blessing of the Animals

Legends abound of how Francis of Assisi communed with the animals. He sang hymns to the moon and sun as his sister and brother and love-songs to all the elements: water, fire, wind, and earth. Francis seems like a pretty good patron saint for a creation-centered place like Jubilee! Bring your furry or feathered or furfureaceous friends for a Franciscan favor on this fantastic feast.

### 10/10 – Therese of Lisieux and Little Flowers of Love

Therese was 15 when she entered a convent in France in 1888 and only 24 when she died of TB, but in those 9 years she became known for her humble, joyful desire to spread love through small acts of kindness. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, originally called Agnes, explained her choice of the name Teresa as follows: “I chose Therese as my namesake because she did ordinary things with extraordinary love.” Therese wrote:

*Love proves itself by deeds, so how am I to show my love? Great deeds are forbidden me. The only way I can prove my love is by scattering flowers and these flowers are every little sacrifice, every glance and word, and the doing of the least actions for love.*

In a world where so many big questions plague us and so many large issues loom over our lives, remembering the beauty of small acts of love might be just what we all need.

### 10/17 – Hafiz and Ecstatic Love

### 10/24 – Brother Lawrence and Practicing the Presence of God

### 10/31 – All Saints! All Souls! All Mystics! Samhain!

### 11/7 – Therese of Avila and the erotic love of God

### 11/14 – Native Mystics and the Interconnection of Everything

### 11/21 – Meister Eckhart and Giving Thanks